

DISCUSSION OF THE AMENDMENT

Claims 1, 3-12, 14-28, and 30-40 and 43-45 are active in the present application.

Claims 2, 13, 29 and 41-42 are canceled claims. Independent Claim 1 is amended herein to require that the nonwoven polymeric fiber consist of at least one of the polymers recited in present Claim 1. Support for the amendment is found in the examples which describe the use of nonwoven materials made of polymeric substances onto which inorganic material-containing slips are applied. Further support is found in the first full paragraph on pages 5-7 of the specification.

No new matter is believed to have been added by this amendment.

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office newly cited to “Silane Coupling Agents” as prior art in the final Office Action of October 10, 2007. The Office appears to be of the opinion that the newly cited prior art is evidence that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to include an adhesion promoter in the permeable membrane of Penth (US 6,309,545) and thereby arrive at the presently claimed invention.

Applicants maintain that any combination of prior art cited by the Office so far that includes a citation to Guiver (US2002/0062737) is deficient at least for the reason that Guiver discloses a specific instance wherein improved adhesion is obtained only with a polysulfone polymer and such improved adhesion is only obtained because the polysulfone polymer is aldehyde-modified and thus is able to bond with amino groups of a silane that has been used to treat a zeolite. Applicants submit that the Office inappropriately expanded the teaching of Guiver as a basis for asserting that the presently claimed invention is obvious.

Regardless of the deficiencies of the rejections presently in this case, independent Claim 1 is amended herein to make it clear that the nonwoven polymeric fiber recited in the claims is one that “consists of” one or more of the polymeric materials recited in Claim 1. Applicants submit that the transitional phrase “consists of” makes it clear that the nonwoven polymeric fiber does not include other materials such as a ceramic material or any other filler. The transitional phrase “consists of” does not exclude those processing agents which are normally present in nonwoven polymeric fibrous materials.

Guiver discloses a membrane that is made by mixing solutions of an aldehyde-modified polysulfone and a solution or suspension of a coupling agent-treated zeolite. The resulting mixture of the aldehyde-modified polysulfone and the coupling agent-treated zeolite is dried to obtain a membrane. Applicants submit that when such a composition is dried it

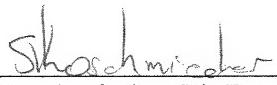
must necessarily leave a residue that is a homogeneous mixture of the polysulfone and the zeolite.

The presently claimed invention stands in contrast to Guiver at least because the nonwoven polymeric fibers recited in the claimed invention consist of a polymeric material. Thus the fibers of the claimed invention exclude the homogeneous polymer/zeolite mixtures of Guiver.

Applicants submit that the presently claimed invention is not disclosed or suggested by Guiver at least because Guiver describes a membrane having a substantially different structure (e.g., a homogeneous mixture of polymer and zeolite) in comparison to the structure of the presently claimed invention (e.g., discrete nonwoven polymeric fibers having a porous ceramic coating on their respective surfaces). All of the rejections rely on Guiver. Because the presently claimed invention is distinguished from Guiver, Applicants submit that the rejections should be withdrawn and all now-pending claims allowed.

Respectfully submitted,

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